***Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland***

***Chapter 10***

***Summary:***

The Mock Turtle and the Gryphon decide to tell Alice about the games they used to play in school. A favorite was a certain dance called the Lobster Quadrille. All the complicated moves and partner changes are described; at the peak of the dance the lobsters are thrown out into the sea and then retrieved. They even perform a little of it for Alice, singing the whole time.

Alice is often asked if she is acquainted with lobsters, or whitings, a type of fish. She does indeed know these animals, and eagerly says so, but then remembers that she is familiar with them only from having seen them on her plate at dinner. Such fish have their tails in their mouths and are covered with crumbs, she says. The creatures deny the crumbs but explain, nonsensically, why the tails of the whitings would be lodged in their mouth. The whole conversation slides into various puns on sea life, "porpoise" and "purpose" for example.

Alice tells her own adventures to the creatures, who listen wide-eyed. However, their only request is to ask her to recite a well-known poem. She does, and gets it all confused with the story she's just heard about the Lobster Dance.

The Gryphon says her version is quite different from the one he used to say. She repeats the pure nonsense and the creatures wonder what about the use of going on with such confusing nonsense and ask her to stop. The Mock Turtle sings another song, this one in praise of a bowl of green soup, entitled "Beautiful Soup." The song is interrupted by a sudden call that a trial is beginning.

***Analysis:***

This Chapter overflows with the sort of nonsense, misremembered rhymes, whimsical and melancholic creatures that characterize the entire tale, as Alice listens to the Mock Turtle and Gryphon relive their past. The scene beautifully depicts what sometimes happens when a young person has to listen to a couple of old folks reminiscing. Happy to have a captive audience, they try to entertain her with exaggerated and even ludicrous stories from long ago, telling her how little she can appreciate it but giving her all the little details anyway.

The frequent use of misremembered songs and rhymes in the tale demonstrates Carroll's great gift of satire, as he pokes fun at the pompous, stilted, and overly educational poems that children were forced to memorize in school. The Victorian Era in England, (roughly 1837 to 1900) initiated public education. In the early days of which, classes were largely grim, repetitive, preachy affairs. Carroll's light-hearted tale aims both to give children something genuinely fun and imaginative to read while also reducing the authority of the moralistic verses memorized in schools.

***Detailed Summary***

The Mock Turtle continues to sigh and sob and finally asks Alice if she has ever been introduced to a lobster. Alice almost volunteers that she once tasted one, but checks herself and simply says no. The Mock Turtle and the Gryphon describe the Lobster-Quadrille, a dance where all of the sea animals (except the jellyfish) partner up with the lobsters, advance from the seashore and throw the lobsters out to sea. The Mock Turtle and Gryphon decide to demonstrate the first figure of the Lobster-Quadrille for Alice, even though they don’t have any lobsters. As they dance, the Mock Turtle sings a tune about a whiting and a snail. After they finish the dance, Alice asks about the whiting, holding back her impulse to mention that she has also tasted whiting. The Gryphon explains to Alice that despite her misconception, whiting does not have crumbs and is named a whiting because it shines the sea animals’ shoes. Noting that in the song, the porpoise steps on the whiting’s tail, Alice says that had she been in the whiting’s place she would have left the porpoise out of the dance. The Mock Turtle explains to Alice that it is unwise for a fish to go anywhere without a “porpoise” (punning on purpose).

The Gryphon and the Mock Turtle ask Alice to recount her adventures, and Alice relates her travels in Wonderland, getting as far as her encounter with the Caterpillar before they interrupt her. They find it “curious” that Alice botched the words to “Father William,” and they order her to recite the poem “‘Tis the voice of the sluggard.” Alice messes up the words of this poem, too, which greatly befuddles the Mock Turtle, who wants explanations of the nonsensical verse that results. The Gryphon recommends that she stop reciting. He offers to show her the Lobster-Quadrille again or hear a song by the Mock Turtle. Alice requests the song and the Mock Turtle sings “Turtle Soup.” As the Mock Turtle finishes the song, the Gryphon hears the cry “The trial’s beginning!” and whisks Alice away.

***Detailed Analysis:***

Though the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon initially seem to sympathize with Alice, she soon learns that they do not understand her plight at all. When she first begins talking to them, they seem to be the only creatures in Wonderland that show interest in her bizarre adventures. By using words such as “curious,” “nonsense,” “confusing,” and even “dreadful,” they align themselves with Alice’s attitudes about the strange situations and creatures she has encountered. They seem to see things the way that Alice does and sympathize with her frustration at Wonderland’s backward logic. Alice soon discovers that their feelings are inauthentic. The Gryphon is too detached to identify with Alice, while the Mock Turtle is so sentimental that Alice cannot believe that his feelings are genuine.

Though the Gryphon and the Mock Turtle are unable to relate to Alice, they break the pattern of antagonism that she has experienced thus far in her interactions with the residents of Wonderland. Up to this point, Alice has met creatures that behave contemptuously toward her. Regardless of whether or not their behavior is genuine or insincere, the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon deviate from the rude belligerence that Alice has come to expect from her encounters. They do not argue with each other or with Alice and make the effort to sympathize and connect with Alice. Their behavior breaks a pattern that Alice has become accustomed to, revealing that Wonderland will frustrate every expectation.

***Critical Study:***

[Alice](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Alice-in-Wonderland/character-analysis/#Alice) reaches a strange house and hears terrible howling and screaming inside. She enters to find a kitchen, where the Cook is stirring a very peppery soup. In the middle of the room, the [Duchess](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Alice-in-Wonderland/character-analysis/#Duchess) is holding (and occasionally shaking) a screaming baby boy, who is also sneezing nonstop because of the pepper.

The Duchess hands the baby over to Alice, who takes him outside. Gradually, the baby turns into a pig, which Alice turns loose. She then spots the [Cheshire Cat](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Alice-in-Wonderland/character-analysis/#Cheshire_Cat) in a tree, who gives her directions to the [Hatter](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Alice-in-Wonderland/character-analysis/#Hatter)'s. When Alice remarks that she doesn't want to "go among mad people," the Cheshire Cat says, "We're all mad here."

[Lewis Carroll](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Alice-in-Wonderland/author/)'s father was rector of a church that featured a carving of a cat's head on one wall. Looked at from a child's perspective, the carving showed the cat to be smiling broadly. This carving may have inspired Carroll's creation of the [Cheshire Cat](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Alice-in-Wonderland/character-analysis/#Cheshire_Cat). Additionally, the expression "grinning like a Cheshire cat" was a familiar one in Carroll's day.

The Cheshire Cat makes the book's first mention of madness, a popular theme in Victorian literature. This is also the first time that [Alice](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Alice-in-Wonderland/character-analysis/#Alice) is warned that the characters she'll meet next are insane, though most of the characters she has already encountered have also seemed mad.

The baby's transformation into a pig is a good example of the dream motif that runs through the novel. In dreams, things can change in unexpected and illogical ways. The transformation of the baby boy is also in keeping with Carroll's opinion of little boys. "My best love to yourself," he once signed off in a letter to a little girl. He added, "To your small, fat, impertinent, ignorant brother, my hatred."

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part***

***Summary Part 1:***

The Mock Turtle is all choked up from sobbing, and the [Gryphon](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters) shows [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/alice) how he beats the Turtle’s back to help him clear his throat. The Turtle recovers, and tells Alice, since she has never lived in the sea, about a dance called a Lobster Quadrille. He explains that the first thing to do is line up along the shore. Two lines, one for sea creatures and one for Lobsters and then the partners must step towards each other. It begins just like a square dance but quickly becomes very elaborate, with the lobsters being flung into the sea.

***Analysis Part 1:***

The Mock Turtle's constant crying about his past experiences indicates his profound sentimental side. The Lobster Quadrille is another example of a "civilized" activity—a dance—that ends in a strange kind of violence.

***Summary part2***

At this point the [Gryphon](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters) and the [Mock-Turtle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/the-mock-turtle) get very excited and propose to show [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/alice) the dance. The Gryphon nominates the Turtle to sing. They begin dancing around Alice, occasionally treading on her toes, and the Turtle sings mournfully about a whiting and a snail dancing the Lobster Quadrille. When it is over, Alice politely compliments them on the song. The Turtle asks if she knows about whitings. She narrowly avoids telling him that she has eaten whiting before. The Gryphon explains that they always have their tails in their mouths, because they insist on flying out to sea with the lobsters.

***Analysis part 2:***

Alice is very polite to her new friends. She knows just what to say, that it was a very interesting dance, even though she is relieved it’s over. Also compare her realization to avoid saying she has eaten whiting to her earlier insensitivity in talking about Dinah to the mouse and birds. She is beginning to be able to navigate social situation, to read between the lines and understand what will and won't make others unhappy or uncomfortable.

***Summary part 3***

The [Gryphon](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters) has lots more to say about the whiting. It tells [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/alice) that it is called a Whiting because it “does the boots and shoes”. She figures her own shoes must have been done by blacking. Shoes under the sea are different, says the Gryphon, they are made of soles and eels. Alice goes back to the song, in which a porpoise is always treading on the whiting’s tail. The [Mock-Turtle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/the-mock-turtle) tells her wisely that no whiting ever travels without a porpoise. Alice thinks this is dubious and the Gryphon changes the subject, asking Alice about her adventures.

***Analysis part 3:***

The Gryphon speaks with absolute conviction, so much so that Alice is taken in by his bizarre explanations for the names of things. Meanwhile, all of his explanations are puns : "eels" instead of "heels", "porpoise" instead of "purpose". Note that all of the other characters have wanted to tell Alice about them, but never were much interested in Alice. This is the first such instance, and seems to imply that the Gryphon and Mock Turtle might be more authentic friends for Alice.

***Summary part 4:***

[Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/alice) says she can describe her adventures from this morning, but that yesterday she was a different person entirely. [The Gryphon](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters) wishes only to hear the adventures – explanations bore him – so Alice tells them both the story from the beginning. They listen intently. They are very interested in the part about [the Caterpillar](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/the-caterpillar), and they tell her to recite another rhyme to see if she has forgotten it. Alice is getting quite fed up of animals ordering her about but she tries it. It comes out all mixed up. “Uncommon nonsense”, the [Turtle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/the-mock-turtle) calls it.

***Analysis part 4:***

Alice seems to be implying here that her adventure in Wonderland has changed her, made her a new person. The Gryphon and Mock Turtle pay close attention, again giving the impression of truly caring, but what becomes evident is that they are interested in the story, not in Alice. They are interested that she can't remember rhymes, not how she feels about that fact. They treat her as an object of interest, not as a person. Meanwhile, Alice is getting fed up with all of these animals telling her what to do.

***Summary Part 5:***

[Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/alice) feels miserable again. She wishes things could be as before. But the [Gryphon](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters) and the [Turtle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/the-mock-turtle) keep interrogating her about the rhyme and ask her for the next verse. She goes on though she really doesn’t want to. It comes out awfully and the Gryphon and Turtle are very confused, so they tell her to stop and decide to sing again instead.

***Analysis Part 5:***

The focus on what she can't do, on what she's getting wrong, on how she's changed has made Alice sad. Alice's sense of self really rests on her memory and familiar things.

***Summary Part 6:***

The Turtle sighs and begins, in a mournful tone, singing a song about soup. They enjoy themselves immensely but before the Mock Turtle can begin a repeat of the chorus, the [Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/the-queen-of-hearts)’s voice is heard in the distance, announcing the beginning of “the trial”, and the [Gryphon](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters) pulls [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/alice) after him, leaving the Turtle singing plaintively on the rock.

***Analysis Part 6:***

Like several other characters in Wonderland, the Mock-Turtle mixes the trivial with the serious as he dedicates his mournful song to soup. As the strains of “Beautiful soooup” get longer and more ridiculously mournful, suddenly the Queen once again comes center stage. The connection of the bloodthirsty and capricious Queen to a trial, a thing of fairness and justice, seems immediately laughable.